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# Public Sector Economics

## Ethical guidelines

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To ensure the high quality of the Public Sector Economics journal (below: *PSE*) and the best practice in publication ethics, the Institute of Public Finance as the publisher has established the following ethical guidelines for publication in *PSE*. The guidelines are continuously updated and the publisher makes every effort to align them with best practices for ethical publication in scientific journals as outlined, for example, in the Committee on Publication Ethics ([COPE](#)) and other professional guidelines in the field of economics and social sciences.

### Journal management

*PSE* is a double-blind peer-reviewed scientific journal **published by the Institute of Public Finance** (below: the publisher).

*PSE* is **published four times a year**: in March, June, September and December.

***PSE*'s objectives** are to disseminate high-quality policy-relevant and applied research in public sector economics, and to promote exchange among researchers in academic and policy analysis institutions in this field.

*PSE* is managed by the **Editorial Board** (below: the editors) comprising the Editor-in-Chief, Co-editors and Associate Editors. The editors meet at least twice each quarter to review the publication line-up and exchange views on the running of *PSE*. They are appointed by and report to the publisher. The publisher's staff and outside scholars are eligible to serve as editors. The editors are appointed for four-year terms and may serve up to three full terms. The publisher may appoint Co-editors for shorter terms to create a staggering of terms. The editors support and promote *PSE* by actively encouraging submissions in the academic and policy analysis communities, reviewing manuscripts, and organising seminars and annual conferences.

The **Editor-in-Chief** is responsible for the general management of *PSE*, including the editorial decision process and day-to-day operational matters. The **Co-editors** advise the Editor-in-Chief on editorial issues and policies and assist her/him in strategic planning and the processing of materials for publication, and together with the **Associate Editors** evaluate the merit of submitted manuscripts, invite and process the referee reports, and coordinate seminars and annual conferences.

The editors nominate, subject to approval by the publisher, a slate of prominent scholars from academic and policy analysis institutions to serve as Advisory Board members. The Advisory Board members are appointed for four-year terms and may serve two full terms. The **Advisory Board** meets biennially with the editors to review the activities and publications of *PSE*, as well as plans and other strategic issues related to the journal. They provide international expertise and support, and occasionally serve as guest editors, ensuring international participation in the editorial process.

*PSE* is financed by the publisher and co-financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth of the Republic of Croatia. There is **no submission fee**.

*PSE* provides **open access** to all its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports the exchange of knowledge in the most productive manner and increases readership and citation of authors' work. The publisher ensures that *PSE* is securely archived and accessible on its [internet website](#). In case the *PSE* stops publishing or goes offline or the Institute of Public Finance as its publisher ceases to exist, the entire archive can be found at the [Portal of Croatian scientific and professional journals](#), and shall remain in the public domain.

## **Ethical guidelines for the publisher**

*PSE* adheres to the principle of an **open, transparent, and fair editing process** to ensure the publication of high-quality academic and policy analysis content.

*PSE* upholds the highest standards of publication ethics and **takes all possible measures against any publication malpractices**. In cases where editors, reviewers, authors or readers of *PSE* become aware of ethical issues or allegations of ethical misconduct, the publisher is committed to investigating the case and taking necessary measures to maintain the integrity of *PSE*. For papers considered for publication this may include declining the submission and informing about ethical misconduct Editors-in-chief of journals concerned, as well as responsible individuals from the author's or reviewer's institution. For papers already published, the publisher may retract the paper and announce the retraction. Regarding the publication ethics, editors, publisher, and all others involved in the publishing process will promptly take all the necessary steps to identify and prevent any misconduct (see below).

The publisher has developed **policies to handle conflicts of interests** concerning editors, authors and reviewers (see below).

The publisher guarantees the **privacy of personal information** for all authors and reviewers. The names and email addresses submitted to the *PSE* website will be used exclusively for processing the publication in *PSE* and will not be made available for any other purpose or to any other party.

The publisher makes provisions for regular **professional training of editors** to keep their editing skills up to date.

The publisher is committed to maintaining the **highest standards of internal quality control** to guarantee the integrity of the *PSE* publishing process.

To encourage **post-publication discussions**, broad professional verification and, if necessary, correction of results, the publisher regularly organises video and in-person seminars of published papers on its online platform or premises in Zagreb. The list and summaries of recent seminars are available on the [Institute of Public Finance news page](#). The publisher supports the publication of any corrections, clarifications, retractions, expressions of concern, and apologies regarding the papers published in *PSE* and will insist on prompt responses following the best practice recommended by the Committee on Publication Ethics (**COPE**) in such cases.

## **Ethical guidelines for *PSE* editors**

### ***Editorial process***

All submissions are first evaluated by the Editor-in-Chief and at least one more editor. In the interest of avoiding delays and using resources efficiently, they can determine that a submission does not fit the *PSE*'s objectives or is of insufficient quality or originality to be eventually published. Authors are usually informed within two weeks about the standing of their submission: editorial rejection or initiation of the peer-reviewing process. The editorial rejection cannot be appealed.

Editors do not tolerate or condone any instances of **plagiarism** or **self-plagiarism**. All manuscripts that pass the initial editorial review are checked for potential plagiarism or self-plagiarism with the aid of standard industry software. All manuscripts also must contain a dedicated AI declaration immediately above the references, detailing the tools used and their purpose. Manuscripts that satisfy the criteria of originality subsequently undergo double-blind peer review.

All primary research articles undergo **double-blind external peer review**, with manuscripts sent **in anonymised form to at least two independent reviewers**. Reviewers are asked to return their reports within four weeks, although extensions may be granted if needed.

After the first round of peer reviews, editors decide about the rejection or revision-and-resubmission and inform the authors.

Revised-and-resubmitted manuscripts, together with detailed responses to reviewers' queries, are sent back to reviewers for the second round of reviews. These follow-up recommendations are expected to be returned within two weeks.

Editors normally decide whether to publish the paper after the second round of reviews. Sometimes several rounds of review and revision may be required. Editors typically ask the authors to make additional changes based on the second round of reviews and their own recommendations before submitting a final version for professional language editing and copyediting.

#### ***Themed or special issues***

For themed or special issues, a call for papers is posted on our website 9-12 months before the planned publication date. One co-editor not involved in the issue is assigned to support the guest editor in the pre-selection of submitted manuscripts and in the processing of external peer reviews. The guest editor approves final revisions of accepted papers, and the assigned co-editor formally accepts them for publication in the journal's online system. If the guest editor drafts an introduction to the issue, the assigned co-editor reviews and approves it.

If an editor or Advisory Board member is serving as a guest editor, the editor-in-chief (or the co-editor not involved in the issue) approves the introduction and oversees the entire editorial process for the issue to ensure impartiality and adherence to the journal's peer review standards. When such a guest editor also submits a manuscript to the issue, the editorial handling and external peer review are managed entirely by another co-editor or the editor-in-chief not involved in the issue. The author-editor is excluded from all editorial decisions regarding their own submission.

#### ***Impartiality and objectivity***

Editors seek manuscripts of high analytical quality in all fields of public sector economics. They evaluate manuscripts and peer reviews solely based on their intellectual content, without regard to the authors' and reviewers' institutional affiliation, citizenship, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, ideology, or political philosophy.

#### ***Confidentiality and privacy of information***

Editors and *PSE* staff are not allowed to disclose any identifying information about the authors and reviewers to anyone other than the publisher. The editors and the *PSE* staff are not allowed to disclose information about the status of submitted manuscripts to anyone other than the authors, the reviewers, and the publisher.

#### ***Conflict of interest***

Editors are not allowed to engage in editorial review if they have any conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, personal, or other relevant relationships or connections with any of the authors, institutions, or companies associated with a submitted manuscript.

Editors must ensure that commercial considerations do not affect their editorial decisions.

Manuscripts submitted by the editors and papers they solicit from other authors for *PSE* are subject to the full review process, like all other submissions to *PSE*.

When an editor of the journal or a member of the Advisory board submits a manuscript, the editorial handling and peer review are managed entirely by another member of the editorial board who is not involved in the submission. In all such cases, the manuscript undergoes the standard double-blind external peer review process.

Editors may not use unpublished material disclosed in submitted manuscripts in their own research. They are obliged to keep confidentiality and not use any privileged information or ideas obtained through the editorial review process for personal advantage.

#### ***Allegations of misconduct***

Editors are obliged to inform the publisher immediately and take prompt and adequate steps on any complaints and appeals presented about a submitted manuscript or article published in the

*PSE*. Examples include but are not limited to: concurrent submissions of a manuscript to multiple journals, concerns about fraudulent research, citation manipulation, or (self)plagiarism. Editors will promptly conduct the investigation, involving contacting the author(s) and any other relevant party. They are committed to follow the best practice recommended by the Committee on Publication Ethics (**COPE**) in such cases, including, if needed, publicising this in good faith and at the earliest opportunity.

*PSE* has an **ethics committee** to handle ethics issues, review allegations, and initiate impartial and confidential investigations of cases. The members of this ethics committee are **Iftekhhar Hasan** (Fordham University), **Dubravko Mihaljek** (*PSE* Co-editor), and **Aleksandar Štulhofer** (University of Zagreb).

### ***Ongoing development of ethical standards***

Editors consistently strive to align *PSE* publication policies and ethical standards with best practices in academic publishing. They take all appropriate steps to train themselves, educate authors and reviewers about publication ethics, and eliminate instances of academic misconduct.

### **Ethical guidelines for *PSE* authors**

#### ***Originality of work***

*PSE* accepts submissions with the understanding that they contain original work not published or submitted for publication in any other journal. Parallel submission of the same manuscript to another journal constitutes misconduct and eliminates the manuscript from consideration. Authors should not submit manuscripts describing essentially the same or marginally different research results already published in other journals.

Posting online an early version of the manuscript - such as a working paper, occasional paper, or other preliminary draft - before submission to *PSE* peer review does not count as prior publication. However, authors must disclose where such versions are available when submitting to *PSE*. Upon publication, authors should update the online posting to indicate that the final version has been published in *PSE*, and include the article's DOI linking directly to the *PSE* publication.

#### ***Authorship and acknowledgement of contributions***

All those who have made significant contributions should be listed as co-authors. Others who have participated in certain aspects of the preparation of the manuscript should be acknowledged. If you are a named co-author, this means that you:

- have drafted or written, substantially revised or critically reviewed the article; and
- have agreed on the journal to which the article will be submitted; and
- reviewed and agreed on all versions of the article before submission, during revision, the final version accepted for publication, and any significant changes introduced at the proofing stage; and
- agree to take responsibility and be accountable for the contents of the article. Share responsibility to resolve any questions raised about the accuracy or integrity of the published work.

The authors should ensure that the work of other researchers in the field of study covered in their manuscript is acknowledged in line with academic principles. They should cite the publications that have been influential in determining the nature of their work. Plagiarism in all forms constitutes unethical behaviour and is unacceptable.

Unless otherwise indicated, the author who submitted the manuscript for publication will be considered as the corresponding author and will be responsible for ensuring that all co-authors have approved the submission, re-submissions, and the final version of the paper.

Regarding potential changes in authorship, editors will insist on prompt responses following the best practice recommended by the Committee on Publication Ethics (**COPE**) in such cases. If any changes in authorship occur during the revision process – such as the addition or removal of authors, or a change in the order of authors – the authors must provide a clear explanation for the change. Written consent must be obtained from all authors involved, including those who are

being added or removed. In addition, any newly added authors must disclose any external sources of funding and declare any potential conflicts of interest.

### ***PSE data policy***

All data used in manuscripts submitted to *PSE* should be acquired **legally**.

Underlying data should be **accurately and objectively** represented in manuscripts.

Authors of accepted papers that contain empirical work, simulations, or experimental work should be prepared to provide, prior to acceptance, **information about the data, codes, and other details of the computations** sufficient to permit replication, as well as information about access to data and codes. Authors are expected to preserve data and codes for at least five years after publication, and to offer assistance to requests for clarification and replication.

When authors discover a significant **error or inaccuracy** in their work published in *PSE*, they must promptly notify the editors and cooperate on the issue. If the editors learn from a third party that a work published in *PSE* contains a significant error, authors must correct or retract the article promptly, or provide evidence of the correctness of the original analysis. *PSE* uses Crossmark software to indicate whether the content of published papers has been updated, corrected, or retracted.

Information obtained by authors in the course of confidential services such as refereeing manuscripts or reviewing grant applications cannot be used without explicit permission of the persons concerned.

### ***Studies involving the participation of human subjects***

*PSE* does not review or publish biomedical studies based, for example, on pharmaceutical or clinical trials. In studies based on interviews, surveys, experiments, and similar methods involving human subjects, authors are responsible for ensuring that the legal rights of survey participants in each jurisdiction are fully respected. These rights include but are not limited to:

- *Obtaining consent from the research participants.* Ethical consent to participate should be voluntary, informed, unambiguous, and documentable. Authors have a particular responsibility to safeguard the freedoms, rights, and human dignity of research participants whose capacity to provide consent is impaired or absent. They must obtain consent from the parents and where appropriate from the children themselves if children participate in research.
- *Transparency about roles and responsibilities.* Authors are responsible for clarifying to the participants the boundaries, expectations, and requirements associated with the research relationship.
- *Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy.* Authors must ensure that the anonymity of research participants is fully protected when it has been agreed upon or otherwise is prudent. They must handle the data confidentially and grant survey participants the right to decide how identifiable personal data and other information (e.g. photographs, recordings, other media) gathered during research will be used. They must respect the privacy of research participants, their personal integrity, and protect them from unwanted interventions and unwanted disclosure.
- *Reporting and storing research results.* Authors are responsible for reporting research results to the participants in a clear and responsible way, and for storing and sharing research data and other research material responsibly. If the material is to be stored, archived, or shared, authors must inform the participants clearly about how, in which format, and at which institutions this will be done before obtaining consent.
- *Information obtained by authors privately,* including in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, must not be used or reported without explicit permission from the source.

### ***Disclosure statements***

Before submitting the manuscript, authors are requested to disclose **all sources of financial support** for the research described in their manuscript, including grants and other institutional and private funding. The disclosure requirement also includes in-kind support, such as obtaining access to data. If they received no research funding, they should state so.

Authors are requested to disclose any financial or other potential **conflicts of interest** that might be perceived as influencing the results or interpretation of their analysis. Examples include, but are not limited to: employment, consultancies, unpaid positions, asset ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent applications or registrations, and other financial or commercial interests directly or indirectly related to the results of the study.

### ***Ethical standards for the use of AI***

PSE recognises the increased use of AI tools in academic research. We follow a consensus among scientific journals and recommendations of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) by considering that AI tools cannot meet the requirements for authorship as they cannot take responsibility for submitted work. Authors are fully accountable for the originality, validity and integrity of the content of their submissions.

Authors are expected to use only the language bases of AI tools, not their knowledge bases. Specifically, authors **may use AI tools in an assistive role** for the following language tasks if they wish:

- Improving language quality, flow of the text, stylistic polishing, and grammar checking;
- Proofreading and obtaining feedback on the content and structure of parts of the text;
- Summarising basic concepts.

Authors are **not allowed to use knowledge bases of AI tools** in their submissions, e.g.:

- Asking AI to suggest a theoretical framework or research project design;
- Asking AI to summarise specific texts;
- Producing full drafts of manuscript from input provided by authors;
- Drafting and structuring content from scratch;
- Ghost-writing all or part of manuscript;
- Inputting the manuscript title or confidential information into an AI platform as a prompt.

If generative AI or AI-assisted tools were used, authors **must include a statement entitled *Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process*** in the manuscript, placed **immediately above the references or bibliography**. This declaration must be included at the time of submission. It should specify:

- the name of the AI tool(s) used
- the purpose of the tool(s).

Authors must confirm that they **reviewed and edited any AI-generated content** and take **full responsibility for the final manuscript**.

### **Example of acceptable declaration:**

„During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used [NAME OF AI TOOL] to assist with [PURPOSE]. The authors reviewed and edited any AI-generated content as needed and take full responsibility for the final manuscript.“

If no AI tools were used, include the statement:

„No generative AI or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.“

*PSE* uses industry-standard software to detect when a text was generated by an AI writing tool. Misuse of AI in manuscripts submitted to *PSE* (e.g., by using AI for any of the tasks listed above that are not allowed) or failure to acknowledge its use may result in rejection of the submission or retraction of a published article. Authors are responsible for ensuring all references are accurate. Fabricated references are considered serious ethical misconduct.

### **Copyright material and legal responsibility**

Authors guarantee that the paper does not violate any copyright rules, e.g. on maps, drawings, literary quotes, lyrics and other copyright material used in their study.

The publisher will not be held legally responsible should there be any claims for compensation arising from the publication of authors' work.

### **Ethical guidelines for *PSE* reviewers**

*PSE* reviews should be conducted **impartially and objectively**. *PSE* reviewers should base their comments on the manuscript's scientific merit, originality, quality of writing, relevance to *PSE* objectives, and – should the reviewers come into possession of relevant information outside the *PSE* – without regard to the authors' institutional affiliation, citizenship, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, race, sexual orientation, religious belief, ideology or political philosophy.

*PSE* reviewers should **respect the intellectual independence of the author**. Personal criticism of the authors is inappropriate. Comments should be courteous and capable of withstanding public scrutiny.

Reviewer comments should acknowledge the positive aspects of the manuscript, identify negative aspects constructively, and indicate the improvements needed. The reviewers should explain and support their judgment clearly enough for editors and authors to understand the basis of the comments. The purpose of peer review in *PSE* is not to demonstrate the reviewer's proficiency in identifying flaws.

*PSE* reviewers should notify the editors promptly if they feel they do not have adequate expertise to provide an authoritative assessment of the research reported in a manuscript. They should also notify the editors if they cannot meet the standard four-week deadline for review in *PSE*.

Reviewers are asked to submit their reports on the standard *PSE* online review form and to add a separate file with detailed comments if they wish.

*PSE* reviewers should call to the editors' attention any substantial similarity or overlap between the manuscript under consideration and any other published paper of which they have personal knowledge, as well as any relevant published work that has not been cited by the authors.

### **Confidentiality and integrity**

*PSE* reviewers must treat any manuscript received for review as confidential. They should not share the manuscript or discuss it with others, except as authorised by the editors.

*PSE* reviewers should not use unpublished material disclosed in the manuscript they are reviewing in their own research. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage. *PSE* reviewers should make every effort to avoid even the appearance that they might be taking advantage of information obtained through the review.

*PSE* reviewers should notify the editors and excuse themselves from the review process if they have **conflicts of interest** in a manuscript resulting from competitive, collaborative, personal, or other relationships or connections with suspected authors, companies, or institutions associated with the manuscript.

Reviews in *PSE* are **not remunerated**. *PSE* by default continuously updates the [list of reviewers](#) on its website. Reviewers may request not to be listed if they prefer so.

### **Intellectual property and copyright policies**

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